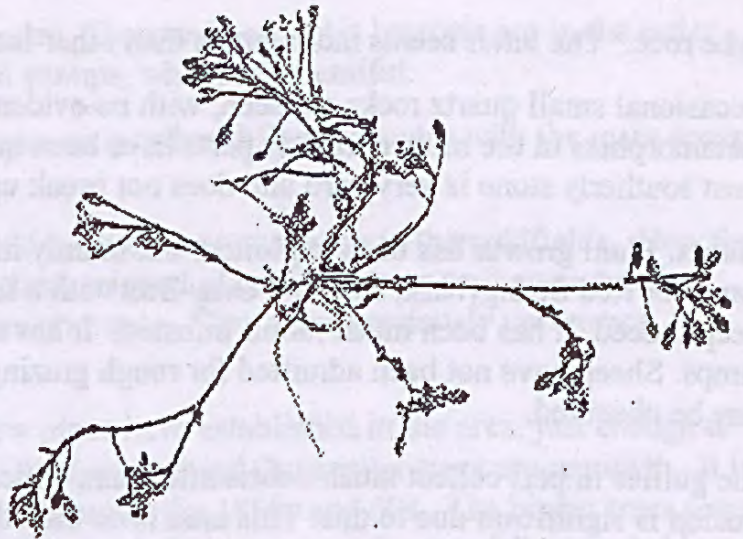


Castlemaine Naturalist

April 1999

#254 Vol 23.3

Non members price: 40c



Ballantinia antipoda

Excursion to Black Hill Reserve, Kyneton

Following upon our Friday night speaker, Carl Nielson, who gave us a talk on the history and development of the reserve, we headed south on Saturday to check the flora, fauna, and work done by Carl and the committee.

George navigated the Castlemaine contingent, deciding that rather than take the highway, a relaxing short-cut through the countryside was called for. After a scenic drive that encompassed many of the local hills, we took the Green Hill - Red Hill Road to Black Hill. We arrived to meet our excursion leader Albert and many of the southern-based field nats.

Albert led our group of 17 on a casual stroll through the reserve, observing the flora and fauna and varying habitat within the reserve. Carl's dedication to the reserve was evident everywhere. After our cuppa Albert explained and showed us nesting boxes, and with the aid of his ladder we were able to quietly observe a Ringtail Possum in one box and six(?) Sugar Gliders in another. None was more thrilled than Penny's grandchildren, who braved the heights for their glimpse of nature.

George navigated us back home on another scenic "short cut" (?) which only had us misplaced (not lost) once. Many thanks to Albert for his help and expertise on the excursion.

Ken and Maureen Dredge

Survey of private land and adjacent crown and road reserve in the upper watershed of Specimen Gully

Geology. The area is principally the boundary area between Ordovician (Yapeenian) and Harcourt Granodiorite. There are some weak remnants of quartz reef, not deemed auriferous, and signs of a volcanic dyke running parallel to the lines of reef. (Ant hills and rabbit warrens are deemed to be indicators of the dyke.)

The main features are outcrops of vertically standing, very hard contact metamorphic rock, with occasional occurrences of hornfels as well as a softer rock deemed to be the remains of the volcanic

dyke rock. The latter seems more fertile than other local soil rocks.

Occasional small quartz rocks are seen, with no evidence of mining in the locality. Parts of the metamorphics in the more northerly parts have been quarried for stone in the distant past, but the most southerly stone is very hard and does not break up readily.

Plants. Plant growth has been exploited, but mainly in the olden times. There are very good stands of Red Stringybark, Red and Grey Box with a few Yellow Box. Some of the country is very steep indeed. It has been much rabbit infested. It has a large kangaroo population with many camps. Sheep have not been admitted for rough grazing for three years. Very many small plants may be observed.

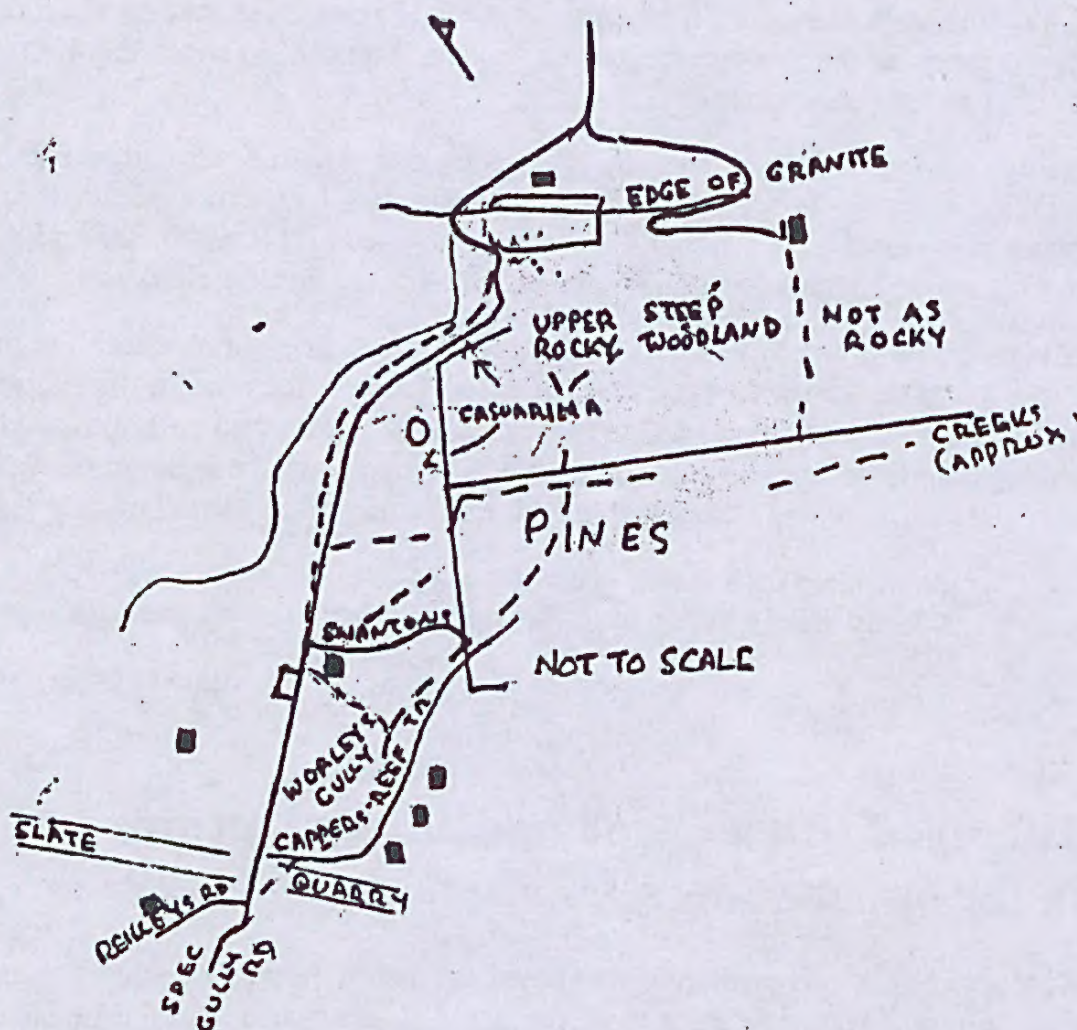
The gullies in part collect much debris after rain, which inhibits some of the erosion. None of the erosion is significant due to this. This area is on the other side to the granite and the trees of that area, only the boxes being common to both areas. Long-leaf Box is not common except on the northern edges. There are a few White Box on the granite side with the occasional Wild Cherry, but stands of Drooping Sheoak grow in two localities. Acacias are uncommon away from the granite and the lower gullies.

A few of the trees have moss on the south sides of the trunks, but far too uncommon for assistance to lost bush walkers.

In the north, *Cassinia* (Coffee Bush) is very dense, but towards the south, the ground cover is mostly very sparse, often with *Daphne* Heath and plants like *Tetratheca* and *Cranberry* Heath. The rocks inhibit smaller plants. Grass is usually *Poa sieberiana* and occasional Shell Grass near the edges of pasture. In one area many very small hop-bush seedlings occur. All show signs of being grazed. Blue Pincushions are found along some reefs.

The principal human interference has been extensive tree felling after ringbarking.

Many ringbarked trees and cut down trees still remain on some quite difficult slopes. Recent woodcutting has been in the easier access places and has used fallen timber as boiler fuel.



Sheep have been grazed upon it for many decades. Thousands of rabbit burrows are in the softer spots and adjacent rocky areas. Many were in stumps, which are plentiful.

Human movement in the area is very uncommon, as is rather difficult country with the main access by kangaroo track.

This area is one of the few areas little disturbed by mining or quarrying in the goldfields. Now the sheep are gone and the rabbits greatly diminished, original plants may grow well enough to be observed. Many seedling Red Stringybarks are now seen. They were previously uncommon because they were usually eaten.

Although adjacent to pine plantations, very few pines have established in the area, just enough to be navigational aids. All are relatively small. A great many of the smaller trees are regrowth. It is very likely that the smaller trees were extensively cut in the 1850s and 60s. The bigger trees seem to have been cut this century, but prior to bulldozer and chain saw use, the tree fellers probably used shire horses and cables with two man saws. The cuts are very neat and flat.

Plants listed for this area, but not listed for Zone B of the Castlemaine Plant List:

Tricoryne elatior (Autumn Lily). Mainly near the granite edges.

Wahlenbergia (Blue Bell). Three sorts.

Erica lusitanica (Erica). In large thickets. In main gully

Platylobium formosum (Handsome Flat-pea). Occasional spreads, usually in loose rocks.

Melichrus urceolatus (Urn Heath). Scattered clumps with scattered bursaria.

Pultenaea sp. (Bush-pea).

Muellerina eucalyptoides (Creeping Mistletoe). Fairly common on trees at the edge of granite.

Eucalyptus albens. (White Box). Mainly along granite edge.

Rhamnus alaternus (Mediterranean Buckthorn). Mainly in isolated spots in sluiced areas.

Rubus hybrid (Loganberry-blackberry cross). Big patch in old cultivated area.

Dodonaea viscosa (Sticky Hop-bush) (Not wedge leaf) Localised.

Viola hederacea (Ivy-leaf Violet). Alongside summer flowing race.

Nerium oleander (Oleander). One in old cultivation area

Amaryllis belladonna. (Belladonna Lily). Very common in old house sites.

Fagus grandifolia (Beech). Large thickets spreading from "Worley's Gully."

Allocasuarina verticillata (Drooping Sheoak). Two stands, both with youngsters common.

Cupressus (Cypress). Two very tall specimens.

Melaleuca decussata (Totem Poles). One specimen.

There is a good tree selection around the Gold Memorial and in the park at Harcourt where only a few are labelled. The Lions Club will label the rest if someone identifies them.

The practice of burning off substitutes introduced plants for Gold Dust Wattle, and in general is NOT GOOD in this type of ground. It is likely the more degraded areas have been subjected to burning off in the last 40 years. The plants recover very, very slowly. Neglected areas look much healthier. Hot wildfire leads to very thick scrubbery, but so does road grading and using Cassinia seedy fill on the road.

Ian Johnson

BOCA outing to Western Treatment Plant, Werribee

Sunday 21 March, 1999.

Approximately 45 dedicated members, under the excellent leadership of John Barkla, braved the elements and searched the farm for elusive and hard to find water birds and waders.

Despite steady rain from 9.15 am to 4.00 pm, we recorded 85 species, with some significant sightings among them, and some new birds to us.

We saw 11 species of duck including Freckled Duck, and 6 species of raptors including Peregrine Falcon. We recorded Buff-banded and Lewin's Rail, and also the Spotted and Spotless Crakes. (I am glad that the experts were there!)

The waders included the Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, and 8 species of Sandpipers including Marsh, Wood and Pectoral.

Other notables were Banded Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Pacific Golden Plover and White-winged Black Tern.

A very cold, wet and bedraggled group departed Werribee at 4.00 pm, all deciding that it had been a wonderful day's birding despite a little personal discomfort.

Ken and Maureen Dredge

CFNC members go birding at Cradle Mountain

The birds seen on a walk on Cradle Mountain in March included:

Wedge-tailed Eagle - pair, soaring near
Cradle Mountain

Ground Parrot - one seen by one observer

Scarlet Robin - one observed

Welcome Swallow - several

Calamanthus - seen from hut

Grey Shrike-thrush - one seen

Yellow-throated Honeyeater - common

Crescent Honeyeater - several

Black Currawong - common

Tasmanian Native Hen - 3 near the start of the walk

Green Rosella - numerous sightings

Pink Robin - 2 records

Flame Robin - one observed

Grey Fantail - several seen

White-browed Scrub Wren - several seen

Yellow Wattlebird - common; more often heard than
seen

Tasmanian Silvereye - numerous sightings

Forest Raven - several seen and heard.

E Perkins

Observations

Welcome Swallows in abundance. An unusual noise was caused by a large flock (about 50) of Welcome Swallows, diving over the block in Tomkies Road. The display lasted for about half an hour. (M Dredge)

Owlet Nightjar at Yapeen. "An hour before dusk on Feb 28, I decided to survey my 2 hectare site at Strathloddon Road for the Bird Atlas. I disturbed what I initially thought must have been a rabbit, but to my amazement it flew into a low branch of the nearest tree. An Owlet Nightjar perched, staring at me, within 5 metres. Having completed the 20 minute survey, I found it still there when I returned." (M Badminton)

Pale Emperor Butterflies. Four were seen recently at Kalimna Point. There have also been sightings in central Castlemaine. (G Sobey)

From the Business Meeting

Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association Meeting at Gippsland Lakes. Four members of CFNC attended. It was a very well organised meeting, with a range of interesting speakers and excursions.

Coming campouts.

Spring 1999 Mildura (Sunraysia FNC)

March 2000 Queenscliff (Geelong FNC)

Sept 2000 Albury/Wodonga

March 2001 Latrobe Valley at Rawson.

Sept 2001 Grampians (Ararat/Stawell FNC)

Kalimna Extension. CFNC has applied for financial assistance towards purchase of the Block from the Vic Field Naturalists Clubs Association.

Australian Naturalists Network. A meeting is planned, to be held at Alice Springs. If you wish to be kept informed about programs/dates please let E Perkins know.

Native 99. See separate notice. CFNC will investigate the possibility of a display table/notice board. If you have suitable material please let a committee member know.

Welcome to new members. We welcome Gill King and David Whillas to our Club.

First Aid on Excursions. A first aid kit will be obtained, to be taken on excursions.

Long Swamp (beside the Moolort-Clunes Road). Some years ago, CFNC contributed to the appeal for the purchase of part of the block. We have never had an excursion to the swamp. It is planned to determine the current status of the land, and perhaps conduct surveys in the area.

Ballantinia. The Club is represented on the committee set up by DNRE with the aim of ensuring the survival of Ballantinia on Mt Alexander. Ballantinia is a small plant in the cress family, and grows on the rocky moss-faces on Mt Alexander. Mt Alexander has the only known population of the species in the world. Earlier records include some of the basalt plains to the south, and Tasmania, but there have been no sightings in these areas for many years, despite intensive searches. More searches in the local area are planned for spring.

Photopoint project. Discussions are being held with the State Library about storage, and requirements for archival photographs.

Gippsland Coastal Board 1998 Seminar Papers. A copy can be obtained from E Perkins. Topics include Greenhouse and the coast; Great coastal walks - past and present; Investigating Victoria's marine, coast and estuarine areas; Managing the coast; Marine protected areas - national parks beyond the shores; Aquaculture development in Victoria; Coastal water quality; Threatened species of shorebirds in Gippsland; Coastal weeds and creeping backyards; Sand dunes - protecting our coastline; Pest animal programs; Local ports - how they're managed; Planning for the future.

Additions to the Castlemaine Plant List

Lambs' Tails (*Ptilotus exaltatus*). Lambs' Tails grows on the Guildford Plateau, and was observed during the Club's excursion to Muckleford Gorge. Lambs' Tails has been recorded from Baringhup-Carisbrook Road, but this is the first record from the plant list area. Lambs' Tails is a very showy species. Its occurrence on the Guildford is an indication of the likely richness of the

flora on Guildford Plateau before the introduction of alien plants, and European grazing animals.

Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens*). The plant was found on the Guildford Plateau during a tree-planting project last year, by Mrs Higgins. When in flower, it is rather obviously a *pimelea*. Unlike other rice-flowers, the branchlets end in spines. It has been recorded from near Stawell and across to Melbourne. At Guildford it is a prostrate plant, and grows amongst the grass. The flowers are yellow, and the branches end in spines. Because of its habit, and the weediness of many basalt areas, its continued survival in our area must be problematical. Perhaps we should grow it in our gardens - preservation by propagation.



Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens*)

Spurge (*Euphorbia maculata*). This species is quite common in our front garden. It is a small prostrate species, and grown on soil and in the driveway cracks. Like most spurges and other members of the Rubber Tree family, its sap is milky. As far as I am aware, this is the second record for Victoria - the other record is for the Mildura area. It is native to North America.

It flowers and sets seed very soon after germination. This makes it difficult to eradicate.

Caltrop (*Tribulus terrestris*). This species was found growing in the railway yard by Barbara Maund. It is a rather distinctive plant. It is prostrate, the leaves are pinnate (rather like those of a vetch, but without the terminal tendrils), the seed-heads are burr-like with stout spines. The spines are able to injure the feet of stock.

Its country of origin is uncertain, and it may be an Australian Native - Ross in *A census of vascular plants in Victoria* treats it as a native species. Whether or not it is a native, its eradication from the railway yards is desirable.

Scented Groundsel (*Senecio odoratus*) was found growing at Germantown, south of Campbells Creek. It is an erect plant with glaucous leaves. When crushed the leaves are strongly scented. The flowers are yellow. It is a native daisy species.

Corn-salad (**Valeriana locusta*) This species was observed at Barfold during last year's excursion. The young leaves of this plant are reputed to be excellent when eaten as a salad. It is also known as Lambs' Lettuce, either because it appears during the lambing season, or because it is relished by lambs.

Dichelachne hirtella. This native grass has been recorded from a number of locations. It was formerly included in *Dichelacne rara* and records of this earlier species now need confirmation.

White-flowered Fumitory (**Fumaria capreolata*). Several species of fumitory grow in the district. They have reddish flowers. This species is white flowered, and was recorded at Barfold last year.

Canary Island Phalaris (*Phalaris canariensis*). It was seen growing in a gutter in Urquhart Street last year. The flower cluster is much shorter than that of the more common phalaris species. It is often a spreading (not erect) plant, and the lemma is rather stout. Some rather uncommon species occur down-stream from the stock-feed shop, and the seed of this grass may well have originated from this source.

E Perkins

Native 99

At Skydancers, Barkers Creek on Saturday 15 May and Sunday 16 May. If you want to find out about native plants, land care projects, who to talk to, where to buy then this is a weekend for you.

Saturday is Garden Day. Talk to native plant experts. Watch a dry land native garden be created. There will be a huge native plant sale.

Sunday is Land Care Day. Talk to local land care groups and exchange ideas. See the Harcourt Valley Primary School junior land care project.

Throughout the weekend there will be demonstrations, seed collecting and sowing, propagation and expert advice.

Speakers include Gary Sobey, Geoff Sitch, Frances Cincotta and Jason Horlock (Greening Australia).

There is no entry charge.

More name changes for plants

Bendigo Wax (or Fairy Wax, or even Castlemaine Wax) is about to have a name change. The only species remaining in *Eriostemon* will be *Eriostemon australasius* and *E. banksii*. Most new names for the former *Eriostemon* have not yet been published, but I expect that Fairy Wax will become *Philotheca verrucosus*. Long-leaf Wax has become *Philotheca myoporoides*.

Have you paid your subscription? The mailing label shows (p) for members financial for 1999. A dash - indicates that the subscription has not yet been received.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc Program April 1999

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall, at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street. Excursions leave promptly at times stated. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days. Visitors always welcome to club meetings and excursions.

Business Meetings are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Fri Apr 9. Wombat Forest, Past, Present and Future. Speaker: Greg Morgan. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat April 10. A Walk in Wombat Forest. Leave 13 Mostyn St at 1.30 pm.

Tues April 20. Bird Atlassing Excursion to Cobaw State Forest. All welcome. Leader: Margaret Badminton. Bring lunch. Leave Castlemaine at 9.00 am from the west end of Mostyn St (near the tennis courts) or at the Crosiers Road turnoff, approximately 10 km from Carlsruhe on the Lancefield Road at 10.00 am. Contact number is 5473 4555.

Fri April 30. Birds of Prey. Talk by Richard Naisbitt, who is in charge of raptors at Healesville Sanctuary. \$2.50 (\$5 family) admission. Maryborough Field Naturalists Club Rooms, Dundas Road, Marytborough. (Maryborough FNC shares the clubrooms with the Rifle Club. It is a bush-land setting, on the right, just after the built-up area. The rooms are about 50 m from the road).

Sat May 1. Ironbarks, Diggings and Autumn. Part of the Castlemaine State Festival. "A 5 km walk in Muckleford Forest along formed tracks through gently undulating forest". Meet at the corner of Bells Lane Track and Talbots Track. Full instructions in the Festival brochure. This is being led by the Field Nats Club and the Mount Alexander Walks and Trails Board.

Fri May 14. Program to be arranged.

Sat May 15. Mopoke Gully, Yapeen. Leave 13 Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. Leader is M. Badminton.

Sat May 15-Sun May 16. Native 99. Garden day and Land Care day at Skydancers, Midland Highway, Barkers Creek.

Fri June 11. The Ecology of Box/Ironbark Forests. Speaker is Annette Muir, who has been working with DRNE. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat June 14. Unknown Miner's Grave and Kalimna North. Leave 13 Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. Leader: R Mills.

Fri Aug 13. Microscopy. Peter Sansom and Ern Perkins. UCA hall. 8pm

Fri Sept. 10. African Parks. John Turnbull. UCA hall at 8 pm.

Sept 15-19. Vic Field Naturalists Clubs Association Campout at Midura. Main program will be at the weekend; the extended program is for early arrivals.

Committee: M Dredge (Pres) ph 5470 6474, E Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), B Maund (Sec), M Badminton (Treas), R Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), G Broadway, J Turnbull, M Oliver, C Morris, K Turner, Z Thomas.

Subscriptions: Ordinary membership: Single \$22, Family \$30; Pensioner/student: Single \$18, Family \$24; Supporting: \$31 The membership subscription now covers postage of the *Castlemaine Naturalist*.

This edition of the Castlemaine Naturalist produced by E. Perkins.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450. ACN A3010